

10 PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

The Authority and the FRA have involved the public and other public agencies in the program environmental review process pursuant to the requirements of CEQA and NEPA. This chapter describes the public and agency involvement efforts in the preparation of this Program EIR/EIS. The public and agency involvement program includes the following efforts.

- Public involvement and outreach—informational materials, including region-specific fact sheets; information and scoping meetings, including public and agency scoping meetings; meetings with individuals and groups; presentations; and briefings.
- Agency involvement—agency scoping meetings, interagency working group, and other agency consultation.
- Notification and circulation of the Draft Program EIR/EIS.

10.1 Public Involvement and Outreach before Draft Program EIR/EIS Release

10.1.1 Public Information

A. MAILING LIST

A mailing list database was developed and used to provide information and announcements concerning the preparation of the Program EIR/EIS to the public. The database was based on an existing Authority contact list and had more than 3,175 entries of federal, state, and local agency representatives; elected officials; property owners; interested persons; and interested organizations. The mailing list was updated for this environmental process by adding public meeting participants and others who asked to be added. Over the course of the project, the list grew to over 3,600 names. This list was used to provide notification of scoping events. The mailing list does not represent the distribution list for the Program EIR/EIS, which is presented in Chapter 13.

B. PUBLICATIONS AND MATERIALS

During the scoping phase, an announcement, fact sheet, and exhibits were developed on various topics. The general announcement regarding scoping meetings was translated into Spanish. The announcement, fact sheet, and exhibits covered the following general topics:

- Dates and agendas of scoping meetings.
- Role and responsibilities of the Authority.
- Project description.
- Project purpose and need, objectives, and alternatives.
- Preliminary alignment and station options in the study area.
- Types of high-speed trains being considered.
- Typical cross sections of high-speed trains.
- Environmental review process.
- Environmental issues and technical studies.

C. CALIFORNIA HIGH SPEED RAIL AUTHORITY WEB SITE

During the program environmental review process, project information and announcements have been posted on the Authority's web site (www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov). The Authority uses the web site to make public documents widely available. The site includes information on HST, the Final Statewide Program EIR/EIS document, the Authority's Implementation Plan, newsletters, press releases, board of directors meeting information, recent developments and new information regarding status of the Bay Area to Central Valley HST Program environmental review process, information on contacting the Authority, and related links. The scoping report and the alternatives screening reports and public materials, in addition to other reports, have been made available on the web site, which is generally updated monthly.

10.1.2 Public Meetings

The Authority and the FRA held informal and formal public meetings during the EIR/EIS preparation process. Various meeting formats (e.g., open house, formal presentation, and question and comment session) were used to present information and provide opportunities for input by participants. Numerous briefings, presentations, and small group meetings were included in the process (See Chapter 11, "Organization, Agency, and Business Outreach before Draft Program EIR/EIS Release," for a list of meetings in addition to those noted here). There were three general categories of public meetings: public and agency scoping meetings, Authority governing board meetings, and presentations and briefings to interested groups.

A. PUBLIC AND AGENCY SCOPING MEETINGS

The scoping activities for the Bay Area to Central Valley HST Draft Program EIR/EIS were conducted between November 15 and December 16, 2005 (scoping period). The public workshops/scoping meetings drew more than 500 participants. The geographical extent and complexity of the proposed project led to scoping meetings being held in multiple locations from the Bay Area to the Central Valley.

The scoping process included six officially noticed agency and public scoping meetings (Table 10.1-1). At each location, two sessions were held, the first from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. and the second from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Each session consisted of an open house followed by a presentation. Given the important relationship of HST alignments and stations to a regional rail system in the northern California area, the Bay Area to Central Valley HST Program EIR/EIS scoping meetings were held in conjunction with public meetings on the San Francisco Bay Area Regional Rail Plan initiation meetings.

Exhibits and handouts used during scoping meetings were distributed at the meetings and through the Authority's web site. These materials included:

- NOP and NOI.
- Scoping meeting announcement postcard.
- Bay Area to Central Valley HST fact sheet.
- Scoping meeting presentation.
- Exhibit posters.
- Scoping period comment card.

At each meeting, attendees were asked to sign in and provide contact information so that updates and future notices could be sent to them. Authority and regional rail staff facilitated the scoping meeting to provide general information and instruction on how to provide public comment.

**Table 10.1-1
Scoping Meeting Locations and Times**

Date	City	Location/Address	Time of Public Agency & General Public Meetings
11/29/05	Oakland	Joseph P. Bort Metro Center, Larry D. Dahms Auditorium, 101 Eighth Street, Oakland	3:00–5:00 p.m. 6:00–8:00 p.m.
11/30/05	San Jose	New San Jose City Hall—Council Wing, Community Room W120, 200 East Santa Clara Street, San Jose	3:00–5:00 p.m. 6:00–8:00 p.m.
12/1/05	San Francisco	San Francisco Civic Center Complex, Hiram Johnson Building, Auditorium, 455 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco	3:00–5:00 p.m. 6:00–8:00 p.m.
12/5/05	Livermore	Livermore Public Library, Community Room A + B, 1188 S. Livermore Avenue, Livermore	3:00–5:00 p.m. 6:00–8:00 p.m.
12/6/05	Modesto	Doubletree Hotel, Ballrooms 1, 2, and 3, 1150 Ninth Street, Modesto	3:00–5:00 p.m. 6:00–8:00 p.m.
12/8/05	Suisun City	Suisun City Hall, Council Chambers, 701 Civic Center Boulevard, Suisun City	3:00–5:00 p.m. 6:00–8:00 p.m.

Each meeting began with a 1-hour open house during which HST and regional rail staff were present to answer questions and discuss materials being handed out or displayed around the room. Following the open house, PowerPoint presentations were made regarding the overall regional rail plan (presented by regional rail staff) and the HST scoping process (presented by Authority staff). The public was then encouraged to ask for clarification regarding either of the presentations. The remainder of the meeting was dedicated to answering questions from the attendees. Written and verbal comments from these meetings, as well as scoping materials, are included and summarized in the *Bay Area-to-Central Valley Scoping Report* (Authority and FRA 2006).

In addition to the formal scoping meetings, other presentations, briefings, and meetings were held during the scoping process. Meetings were attended primarily by public agencies and other representative local organizations. Notification of the meetings was provided by telephone and/or email to local/regional agency and organization representatives. Chapter 11, "Organization, Agency, and Business Outreach before Draft Program EIR/EIS Release," includes a list of the additional meetings held as part of the Authority's outreach effort, both during and subsequent to scoping.

B. CALIFORNIA HIGH SPEED RAIL AUTHORITY BOARD MEETINGS

The Authority governing board typically holds monthly meetings. Board meetings usually are held in Sacramento but were also held in the Bay Area to help encourage greater participation from agencies and the general public in the Bay Area. The board meetings during the program environmental review process regularly included status reports on the preparation of the Program EIR/EIS and provided opportunities for public comment. Authority board meetings are announced by posting on the Authority's web site and by mailing to approximately 1,600 persons and organizations. Minutes from board meetings are also posted on the web site. The places and dates of the Authority's board meetings are listed below.

- Sacramento—November 1 and 2, 2005.
- San Jose—January 25, 2006.
- Oakland—March 22, 2006.

- Sacramento—August 9, 2006.
- Sacramento—September 27, 2006.
- Sacramento—October 25, 2006.
- Sacramento—November 8, 2006.
- Sacramento—December 13, 2006.
- Sacramento—January 29, 2007.
- Sacramento—March 2, 2007.
- Sacramento—April 18, 2007.
- Sacramento—May 23, 2007.
- San Carlos—June 27, 2007.
- Sacramento—September 26, 2007.
- Sacramento—November 14, 2007.
- Sacramento—December 19, 2007.
- Sacramento—February 6, 2008.
- Sacramento—April 2, 2008.
- Anaheim—May 14, 2008.

C. PRESENTATIONS, BRIEFINGS, AND OUTREACH

During the program environmental review process, presentations to conferences, forums, local and regional government agencies, interest groups and organizations, and agency meetings and other briefings have been given to provide general information concerning the proposed HST system and the program environmental review process. Interest groups included nongovernmental organizations (e.g., RailPac), community planning organizations (e.g., Transportation Land Use Coalition [TALC]), and public interest discussion/research groups (e.g., WTS Seminar). The state, regional, and local groups that participated in this aspect of the Authority and FRA outreach effort are listed in Chapter 11, "Organization, Agency, and Business Outreach before Draft Program EIR/EIS Release."

10.1.3 Notification of Scoping Meetings

A California state NOP was distributed to the State Clearinghouse; elected officials; local, regional, and state agencies; and interested members of the public on November 14, 2005. An NOI was published in the *Federal Register* on November 28, 2005. The NOP and NOI presented the purpose of the project, the project limits, a description of alternatives to be considered, the need for agency input, potential environmental impacts of the project, the contact name for additional information regarding the project, and the dates and locations of the scoping meetings.

The Authority held scoping meetings in conjunction with San Francisco Bay Area Regional Rail Plan public meetings. Various federal, state, and local agencies; elected officials; community, business, and environmental leaders and organizations; and other interested individuals received notification of the first phase of public workshops/scoping meetings. The notification activities included legal notices, direct mail, web postings, media advisories, email blasts, and flyers, as described below. Several methods were used to notify the public of the scoping process.

- Notification of the scoping meetings was published in nine local newspapers on November 15, 2005. These newspapers were the *Modesto Bee*, *Merced Sun Star*, *Fresno Bee*, *Stockton Record*,

Sacramento Bee, Daily Republic, Oakland Tribune, San Francisco Examiner, and San Jose Mercury News.

- An announcement postcard was distributed to approximately 3,175 individuals, agencies, organizations, and businesses on a mailing list derived from prior work and current project outreach. More than 1,500 addresses of public agencies, organizations, and individuals were extracted from the MTC contact database. The postcard provided a brief description of the project and the purpose of scoping, times and locations of scoping meetings, contacts for additional information, and contacts for additional information in Spanish.
- MTC mailed workshop flyers to its Bay Area Partnership Technical Advisory Committee, which includes representatives from Caltrans, county congestion management agencies, and local transit operators, for discussion at its meeting on October 24, 2005.
- The San Joaquin Council of Governments (SJCOG) mailed workshop flyers to 89 addresses representing its standing committee members (Citizen's Advisory Committee, Social Services Transportation Advisory Committee, Technical Advisory Committee, Manager's and Finance Committee, and Transit Operator's Working Group) on November 16, 2005.
- Information about the workshops/scoping meetings was posted on MTC's web site: www.mtc.ca.gov; the Authority's web site: www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov; the FRA's web site: www.fra.dot.gov; and the Regional Rail Plan public web site: www.bayarearailplan.info. Also, Caltrain's web site (www.caltrain.com) provided a link to the Regional Rail Plan public web site.
- Media advisories/press releases were issued by MTC, including a November 17, 2005, media advisory, a November 30, 2005, press release following the first workshop/scoping meeting in Oakland, and a December 1, 2005, press release prior to the Modesto workshop/scoping meeting. MTC also responded to all press calls on the Regional Rail Plan.
- MTC sent an email blast to the Regional Rail Steering Committee on October 25, 2005.
- MTC sent an email blast to 5,200 email addresses extracted from MTC's contact database of public agencies, organizations, and individuals on November 1, 2005.
- Altamont Commuter Express (ACE) distributed workshop flyers through a seat drop to more than 1,350 of its morning commuters on November 10, 2005.
- SJCOG sent an email blast to 4,617 email addresses compiled as part of its I-205 Campaign on November 21, 2005.
- Some 50,000 copies of a special BART Bulletin were distributed at all 34 BART station fare gates starting on November 29, 2005.
- Caltrain distributed 6,000 workshop flyers through a seat drop and issued a press release announcing the upcoming San Jose, San Francisco, and San Carlos workshops on November 30, 2005.
- Stanislaus Council of Governments (StanCOG) sent an email blast to email addresses representing its policy board and standing committees.

10.2 Agency Consultation before Draft Program EIR/EIS Release

10.2.1 Agency Scoping

In addition to the scoping meetings, informal roundtable/workshop meetings were conducted with many public agencies. Many of the agency contacts made during the scoping process led to subsequent one-on-one and small group agency consultation meetings during the preparation of the Program EIR/EIS.

10.2.2 Interagency Consultation

The Authority and the FRA convened staff representatives from 27 interested federal and state agencies to provide input on the environmental review process. The EPA and the USACE were designated cooperating agencies under NEPA for the preparation of the Program EIR/EIS, as reflected in an MOU among these agencies and the FRA. In addition to the scoping meetings, two agency consultation meetings were held on April 19, 2006. The federal cooperating agencies and the lead agencies had frequent communications throughout this program environmental process.

10.2.3 Other Agency Consultation

In addition to the scoping process and interagency staff meetings, agency consultation has taken place at the regional level. Chapter 11, "Organization, Agency, and Business Outreach before Draft Program EIR/EIS Release," lists these additional briefings. The Authority is a partner in the management of the SF Bay Area Regional Rail Plan, and Authority staff have participated as part of the Regional Rail Program Management Team (with MTC, Caltrain, and BART) throughout that planning effort—ensuring continuity between the Regional Rail Plan and the Bay Area to Central Valley HST Program EIR/EIS.

The FRA and the Authority also initiated consultation with the Native American Heritage Commission as part of the Statewide Program EIR/EIS. A search of their Sacred Lands file and lists of Native American contacts was conducted as part of the Statewide Program EIR/EIS. The Authority has contacted tribal representatives as part of this Program EIR/EIS.

10.3 Scoping Summary

The scoping process helped the lead agencies identify general environmental issues to be addressed in this Program EIR/EIS. The public and agency comments identified support for and interest in the proposed HST system in the study area and indicated the need for the proposed system to be connected to existing transportation systems. Much of the public comment focused on preferences for or against potential HST alignment alternatives. Providing potential freight service was also frequently mentioned. Concerns regarding environmental issues typically focused on potential noise and visual impacts, safety issues, potential impacts on air quality and sensitive habitats, and the potential for growth inducement. In the East Bay and Peninsula corridors, comments suggested the need to consider improving existing passenger rail services in existing corridors with compatible/consistent technologies versus adding new dedicated rights-of-way and services. Support was expressed for station locations at the proposed new Transbay Transit Center in San Francisco, at Diridon Station in downtown San Jose, in downtown Oakland, and in Livermore and Union City. The comments identified the need for the project to be sensitive to such environmental issues as noise, visual impacts, safety, impacts on wildlife refuges, and effects of induced growth. Concerns were raised regarding train speeds in urban areas.

Several overall themes related to HST arose at public meetings, as follows:

- Views on and preferences for Southern Alignments vs. Altamont Pass Alignments are divergent and strong.
- A Diablo Range "Direct" Alignment is not a viable option because it would present severe environmental impacts.
- Grasslands Ecological Area (GEA) is a critical environmental resource.
- The EIR/EIS should expand evaluation of biological impacts.
- HST should be used to upgrade commuter rail services.
- Interest, concerns, and requirements regarding new San Francisco Bay Crossing.

- HST system must be safe and secure.
- HST system connectivity and convenience are key.
- Should have TOD around stations.
- There is support for an HST system linking California's major metropolitan areas.
- Support for the Transbay Transit Center as the Downtown San Francisco HST terminus.
- Concerns relating to the potential for the HST Alignment Alternatives to induce growth.
- Questions about how the Program EIR/EIS address potential mitigation measures.

10.4 Notification and Circulation of the Draft Program EIR/EIS

Notice regarding the availability and the circulation of the Draft Program EIR/EIS were provided pursuant to CEQA and NEPA requirements. The Draft Program EIR/EIS was released for public review and comment on July 16, 2007, and noticed in the *Federal Register* on July 20, 2007. The initial public comment period was scheduled to end September 28, 2007, but due to public requests, it was extended to October 26, 2007. All comments submitted to the Authority during this review period have been addressed and responded to as part of this Final Program EIR/EIS.

Notification packets announcing the availability of the Draft Program EIR/EIS were mailed on July 13, 2007, to federal cooperating agencies, other affected agencies, and elected officials. The federal cooperating agencies and other selected agencies received an announcement letter from the Authority, a hard copy of the Draft Program EIR/EIS, and a CD copy of the document with appendices. Sixty-six other affected public agencies received an announcement letter from the Authority, an Executive Summary, and a CD copy of the document with appendices. Sixty Native American tribal representatives received an announcement letter from the Authority, an Executive Summary, and a CD copy of the document with appendices. Eighty-two elected officials received an announcement letter from the Authority and an Executive Summary. A distribution list for the Draft Program EIR/EIS was included in the Draft Program EIR/EIS.

The general public was informed of the Draft Program EIR/EIS release through distribution of an announcement of the document's availability to the project mailing list. The announcement also provided the details for submitting comments by mail or fax and announced dates, times, and locations of public hearings. The mailing list contains approximately 3,600 statewide contacts, including federal, state, and local elected officials; federal, state, and local agency representatives; chambers of commerce; environmental and transportation organizations; special interest groups; media; private entities; and members of the public. The mailing list was based on the database developed as part of the statewide Program EIR/EIS and the MTC contact database. The mailing list is on file with the Authority and is available for viewing.

The Program EIR/EIS was also made available for viewing and downloading at the Authority's web site, www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov. Comments were accepted directly from the website as well. The website also provided the opportunity to request a CD ROM or printed copies of the document.

The announcement and web site listed the libraries with a hard copy of the document available for review. Participating libraries are located in the following cities: Fremont, Gilroy, Merced, Modesto, Mountain View, Oakland, Pleasanton, Palo Alto, Sacramento, San Francisco, San Jose, and Stockton.

The release of the Draft Program EIR/EIS was announced through display ads distributed in the following newspapers: *Sacramento Bee*, *Daily Republic*, *Oakland Tribune*, *San Francisco Examiner*, *San Jose Mercury News*, *Modesto Bee*, *Merced Sun Star*, *Fresno Bee*, and *Stockton Record*.

10.4.1 Public Hearings

The Authority held a total of eight public hearings to present the Draft Program EIR/EIS and to receive public comments. Originally, six public hearings were scheduled, but due to requests, two more public hearings were planned. A court reporter was present at each of the public hearings to record oral comments. At each public hearing, oral comments could be made during the “public testimony” portion of the meeting or during the open house portion of the meeting to the court reporter at the “public comments” table. Oral comments on the Draft EIR/EIS were only accepted during the eight public hearings.

Requests were made to extend the comment period, and the Authority Board, in consultation with the FRA, extended the comment period at the September 28, 2007, board meeting to October 26, 2007. A notice postcard regarding the comment period extension to October 26, 2007, was distributed to the project mailing list on October 3, 2007 (list is described in 10.1.1 above). In addition, the FRA published a notice of the extension in the *Federal Register*.

The public was notified of the first six public hearings through a notice postcard that provided the public hearing locations and schedule. The notice postcard was mailed on July 18, 2007, to the project mailing list (list is described in Section 10.1.1). The two additional public hearings were announced through notice announcements mailed on September 5, 2007, and September 18, 2007, to the project mailing list.

The public hearings were also announced through a display ad published in nine newspapers within the region. The display ad for the first six public hearings was published on Friday, July 20, 2007. The Stockton public hearing ad was published on Tuesday, September 4, 2007, and the ad for the Sacramento public hearing was published on Wednesday, September 19, 2007. The Stockton public hearing ad was published in the *Modesto Bee*, *Tracy Press*, and *Stockton Record*, and the Sacramento public hearing ad was published in the *Sacramento Bee*.

In addition to the public hearings held during the comment period, Authority staff and the FRA notified over 50 Native American tribal organizations and held a meeting on August 24, 2007, to discuss the Draft Program EIR/EIS and to solicit input.

A. INITIAL SIX PUBLIC HEARINGS

Each of the six initial public hearings started at 4:00 PM and ended at 6:00 PM. From 4:00 to 4:15 PM there was an informational open house with exhibit boards available for viewing and project staff present to answer questions and discuss issues. Formal public testimony began at 4:15 PM. Authority Board members facilitated the public testimony. Other Board Members, Authority staff, and an FRA Representative (at selected meetings only) were present to listen to comments. The open house resumed once all public testimony was received.

The public hearings were scheduled as follows:

- San Francisco—Thursday, August 23, 2007
- San Jose—Friday, August 24, 2007
- Livermore—Monday, August 27, 2007
- Oakland—Tuesday, August 28, 2007
- Gilroy—Wednesday, August 29, 2007
- Merced—Thursday, August 30, 2007

B. ADDITIONAL TWO PUBLIC HEARINGS

The two additional public hearings were held from 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM following the same format of the previous meetings and included an open house and public testimony with Board Members and Authority staff present to listen to comments.

The two additional public hearings were scheduled as follows:

- Stockton—Tuesday, September 18, 2007
- Sacramento—Wednesday, September 26, 2007

At each public hearing, speaker cards were available for public testimony. Individuals who wished to testify submitted a speaker card and were then called in turn by the facilitator. Individual comments were not time limited and allowed sufficient time for people to comment. A court reporter was present and recorded all the oral comments. Individuals were also able to make oral comments directly to the court reporter once the public testimony session had ended. Comment sheets were available for submitting written comments.

C. PUBLIC HEARING OVERVIEW

In all, over 354 members of the public attended the public hearings.

San Francisco—Thursday, August 23, 2007, 4:00–6:00 PM

- Location: San Francisco City Hall, Board Chambers, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
- Individuals Signed In: 42

San Jose—Friday, August 24, 2007, 4:00–6:00 PM

- Location: San Jose City Hall, City Council Chambers, 200 East Santa Clara Street
- Individuals Signed In: 63

Livermore—Monday, August 27, 2007, 4:00–6:00 PM

- Location: Livermore City Council Chambers, 3575 Pacific Avenue
- Individuals Signed In: 23

Oakland—Tuesday, August 27, 2007, 4:00–6:00 PM

- Location: Oakland City Hall, City Council Chambers, 1 Frank Ogawa Plaza, 2nd Floor
- Individuals Signed In: 30

Gilroy—Wednesday, August 29, 2007, 4:00–6:00 PM

- Location: Gilroy City Hall, City Council Chambers, 7351 Rosanna Street
- Individuals Signed In: 28

Merced—Thursday, August 30, 2007, 4:00–6:00 PM

- Location: Merced County Administration Building, Board Chambers, 2222 M Street, 3rd Floor

- Individuals Signed In: 84

Stockton—Tuesday, September 18, 2007, 4:00–6:00 PM

- Location: San Joaquin Council of Governments Regional Center Board Room, 555 E. Weber Avenue
- Individuals Signed In: 53

Sacramento—Wednesday, September 26, 2007, 4:00–6:00 PM

- Location: State Capitol, Room 112, 10th Street and Capitol Mall
- Individuals Signed In: 61 (includes those attending regular Board Meeting)

10.4.2 Summary of Comments

In addition to comments received through the public hearings, written comments on the Draft Program EIR/EIS were sent to the Authority in the form of letters and faxes, and were also sent through the Authority's website. Table 10.4-1 lists the number of those providing comments during the public comment period including those from the public hearings. Some of the letters received listed multiple agencies. In addition, a number of individuals and organizations also orally commented at the public hearings and/or commented both in hardcopy and electronically (through the website). More than 400 people provided over 1,300 comments from July 20, 2007, to October 26, 2007, during the circulation period (either through written letters or oral comments).

Table 10.4-1
Comment Submittals on the Draft Program EIR/EIS

Method of Comment Submission	Federal		State		Local		Organization	Individual	Total
	Elected	Agency	Elected	Agency	Elected	Agency			
Public Hearings									
Oral Testimony	4	0	1	3	21	30	47	57	163
Written	2	0	1	2	3	6	1	12	27
Letters/Faxes	1	8	4	6	12	24	17	35	107
Web				1		5	15	83	104
Total	15		18		101		80	187	401

Through the public hearings, 163 people provided oral testimony and 27 provided written comments. There were 106 written letters and faxes received (1 from federal elected officials¹, 8 from federal agencies, 4 from state elected officials², 6 from state agencies, 11 from local elected officials, 21 from local agencies³, 22 from organizations⁴, and 34 from individuals), and 104 people provided comments on the Authority's website (1 from a state agency, 5 from local agencies, 15 from organizations, and 83 from individuals).

¹ 1 letter signed by 5 federal elected officials of the U.S. Congress.

² 1 letter signed by 4 state elected officials of the California Legislature.

³ 1 letter signed by 3 local agencies.

⁴ 1 letter representing comments of 10 organizations/agencies.

A. OVERVIEW OF COMMENTS RECEIVED

The brief summary below provides an overview of written letters, comments received through the Authority's website, and oral testimony received at the public hearings during the comment period. The responses to the comments received on the Draft Program EIR/EIS are included in Volume 3 of the Final Program EIR/EIS.

In general, the comments fell into two categories: HST program and environmental issues. Many of the comments supported the HST program; however, disapproval of certain alternative routes was also expressed. Most of the comments either favored one HST alternative (alignments and/or station locations) over another or favored combined alternatives. Concerns were raised about potential environmental impacts from the construction and operation of HST service. Many comments about environmental impacts dealt with alternative HST alignments, but some of the commenters also were concerned with the potential for the HST system to induce growth. Some comments were raised regarding the adequacy and detail of the Program EIR/EIS. A few requested for an extension to the comment period and for additional public meetings to be held (Note: the comment period was extended and two additional public hearings were provided). A few also indicated that it was essential for the bond measure to remain on the ballot in 2008. The following bullets summarize some of the comments received:

- Support for a HST system linking California's major metropolitan areas.
- Support and opposition for specific alignment options between the Bay Area and Central Valley.
- Opposition to HST alignment through the GEA.
- Opposition to HST alignments through the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge.
- Support for Castle Air Force Base as the HST station location and maintenance facility.
- Support for the Transbay Transit Center as the Downtown San Francisco HST terminus.
- Interest in station location, design, and potential for joint development.
- Concern that the project crossed Tribes Ancestral Territory.

As noted above, those providing input focused their comments on the two general categories of the HST program or environmental issues, as summarized below.

High-Speed Train Program

The vast majority of commenters strongly supported the HST program; many expressed urgency in getting the project built as soon as possible. Many considered the HST program to represent an opportunity for California to:

- Demonstrate leadership on a national level.
- Begin to address the global climate change issue.
- Provide desperately needed congestion relief.
- Provide much needed alternatives to travel by both the automobile and airplanes.
- Serve population centers and provide an alternative to air travel between the Bay Area and Los Angeles.
- Provide solutions for combating air quality issues.
- Provide an economic benefit to California generally and Silicon Valley and the Central Valley.

- Provide complementary transportation service to other existing transit systems, as well as agency regional transit system plans.

Some of those providing comments questioned the necessity for the project or whether it was an effective project, indicating that building additional lanes on the freeways, especially those that would allow for high speed automobile travel, was a better alternative. A commenter indicated that an alternative that would upgrade rail corridors to 125 miles per hour travel speed would be a sufficient and more effective means of providing congestion relief. It was also expressed that the HST system needs to serve the San Francisco International Airport and San Jose International Airport.

Many commenters indicated that if a high speed train system was going to be built, it needed to focus on what they perceived to be the overall objective: to provide a fast downtown to downtown alternative from San Francisco to Los Angeles.

Some expressed concern that the program would be partially built and then lose funding, and never be fully completed. A few commenters also addressed the need for the federal government to fund the rail program, with some indicating that they believed a national high-speed rail program was essential.

Route Preference

In general, a large portion of the comments received addressed which route should be selected, with some commenters discussing specific station locations, connections to BART and Caltrain, and preferred locations for the storage/maintenance facilities. Many commenters expressed a preference for either the Pacheco Pass or Altamont Pass routes with some wanting both routes to connect the Bay Area to the Central Valley and suggesting close coordination between this project and the MTC San Francisco Bay Regional Rail Plan.

The reasons given for supporting the Pacheco Pass route included that it:

- Provides quicker travel times between San Jose/Silicon Valley and Southern California.
- Provides more frequent/better service between Bay Area and southern California.
- Provides higher ridership potential.
- Results in fewer potential environmental impacts.
- Avoids impacts on wildlife and sensitive habitat through Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge.
- Best serves the Caltrain Corridor (San Francisco to Gilroy).
- Provides good HST access for the three county Monterey Bay area with a south Santa Clara HST station.
- Can serve San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose without a new crossing of the Bay.
- Provides service through San Jose and best serves south Bay.
- Is less costly for first phase of system between the Bay Area and Anaheim.

In addition, commenters indicated that if the Pacheco Pass route were selected, BART could be extended to serve communities along the Altamont Pass corridor and that the ACE trains already serve those areas; thus, the Altamont Pass route would be a redundant service. Some expressed concern about the redundancy of service along the Caltrain corridor and that the shared use would present conflicts with scheduling and use of stations.

The reasons given for supporting the Altamont Pass route included that it:

- Provides quicker travel times between Sacramento/Northern San Joaquin Valley and the Bay Area.
- Best serves the Central Valley.
- Serves more Northern San Joaquin markets on the Authority's adopted first phase of construction between the Bay Area and Anaheim.
- Provides higher ridership potential.
- Has less potential for environmental impacts.
- Avoids impacts on wildlife and sensitive habitat through Pacheco Pass and the GEA.
- Serves a greater population/more population along the alignment.
- Best serves ACE corridor and reduces traffic along I-580.
- Has better service between the Bay Area and Southern California (either reduced frequency is needed on shared Caltrain alignment or HST service can be split).
- Best serves San Jose since it would be a terminus station and with much faster travel times to commuter markets in the Northern San Joaquin Valley.
- Is less sprawl inducing.

A few commenters indicated that both routes should be built because both areas equally need the HST system. Some indicated that the Pacheco Pass route could operate as an express route and the Altamont route could operate as more of a regional route. It was also noted that with either alignment, design refinements would be important to reduce overall impacts.

Environmental Issues

The comment letters contained concerns about environmental issues. Some comments were specific: addressing the adequacy of the Draft Program EIR/EIS, the type of modeling for some aspects of the study, the depth of the analyses for some subjects, etc.; however, most were not addressing the Draft Program EIR/EIS but were speaking to overall environmental concerns. A number of comments were related to biology (Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, GEA, wildlife movement corridors, and sensitive habitats). Comments generally related to the following topics:

- Biology
- Floodplains
- Travel times
- Ridership
- Traffic and parking
- Air quality
- Noise and vibration
- Visual quality
- Farmland
- Geologic and soil constraints
- Land use
- Utilities
- Hydrology

- Growth inducement and cumulative impacts
- Operating and capital costs

The more specific concerns included:

- HST likely to adversely affect federally listed plants/animals.
- EIR/EIS makes no provisions for future of federally listed species and no assurances of total avoidance.
- Impacts to the GEA and Grasslands Important Bird Area.
- Growth inducing impacts of the HST system.
- Concern that the HST program does not equitably serve all populations and low- and moderate-income groups are under served.
- Encroachment onto Department of Water Resources land, which would trigger their involvement as a Responsible Party and need for permits.
- Need to allocate sufficient funding for mitigation measures.
- Impacts to wildlife movement.
- Concern that impacts to parks, trails, and historic/cultural resources were not fully evaluated.
- Noise and vibration impacts on wildlife.
- Impacts to San Francisco Bay and the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge.
- Concern about addition of two tracks that would impact adjacent planned development.
- Stand alone mitigation program needs to be developed and carried forward to ensure implementation.
- Concern about cumulative impacts.
- Concern about habitat fragmentation if both Pacheco Pass and Altamont Pass options were implemented.

Some commenters indicated that alternatives should be evaluated that avoided or minimized impacts. Some indicated that the Draft Program EIR/EIS deferred analysis and that mitigation measures provided are vague and unenforceable. Some also indicated that the growth of Silicon Valley was not adequately addressed.

10.4.3 Responses to Comments Received and the Final Program EIR/EIS

As part of this Final Program EIR/EIS, the Authority and FRA have responded to comments received, which are included in and have informed the preparation of this Final Program EIR/EIS. The members of the Authority Board will consider the comments and input received on the Draft Program EIR/EIS and the responses prior to certifying the Final Program EIR. Once the Authority Board has certified the Final Program EIR, it may approve the project and issue a CEQA Findings of Fact and a Statement of Overriding Considerations and file a Notice of Determination with the State Clearinghouse in the Governor's Office of Planning and Research.

The FRA is the agency responsible for authorizing federal involvement for the project and is the NEPA lead agency for the Final Program EIS. The EPA and the USACE are federal cooperating agencies under NEPA. FRA will consider all comments and responses in the preparation of the Final Program EIS and the issuance of a NEPA Record of Decision.

10.4.4 Additional Agency Consultation and Outreach Activities

The FRA and Authority staff have consulted with representatives of federal, state, and local agencies as well as various groups and organizations in preparation of this Final Program EIR/EIS.

